

NEWSLETTER



NORTH CAROLINA
ASSOCIATION ON AGING

SPRING 2026

VOL. 1 ISSUE 2

New to the field of Aging?
Or need an aging network refresher?

AGING BOOTCAMP 2026 VIRTUAL TRAINING MAY 4

Hosted by the North Carolina Association on Aging, this virtual bootcamp is designed for professionals who are new to the aging network or those who want a refresher on programs, services, and key issues impacting older adults across North Carolina.

What You'll Learn:

- ✓ Overview of the Aging Network
- ✓ Advocacy for Older Adults
- ✓ All Ages, All Stages
- ✓ NC Adult Services
- ✓ NC Senior Centers & the Senior Center Alliance

Registration

NCAOA Members – \$35
Non-Members – \$45

REGISTER NOW

Join professionals from across North Carolina to strengthen your understanding of aging services and connect with the statewide aging network.



Join Us. Stay Connected. Make an Impact.

NCAOA's strength comes from its members. We encourage you to join or renew your membership, share this newsletter with colleagues, and become an active part of North Carolina's aging network. Your involvement helps ensure that aging services professionals have a strong, unified voice, access to timely information, and opportunities to learn from one another.

By joining the North Carolina Association on Aging, you are investing in your own professional growth and the future of aging services across our state. To join or renew your membership, visit www.ncaoa.org.



Greetings from the NCAOA President

Sandy Pace, Retired Director of the Virginia S. Tillett Community Center in Dare Co.

As we welcome the spring season, I'm reminded of the energy and dedication that continues to drive North Carolina's aging network.

Across our state, professionals, volunteers, and community partners are working every day to ensure older adults have access to meaningful programs.

essential services, and opportunities to remain active and engaged.

NCAOA remains committed to supporting this important work through professional development, collaboration, and advocacy. Opportunities such as the NCAOA Aging Bootcamp and ongoing information sharing help strengthen our network and ensure we continue learning from one another.

As our communities continue to grow and change, so do the needs of the older adults we serve. It is more important than ever that we stay connected, share ideas, and support one another in advancing innovative programs and services that improve quality of life for older North Carolinians.

Thank you for the work you do each day to support older adults and their families across our state. Your dedication truly makes a difference.

NCAOA Now Accepting Nominations for the 2026 Excellence in the Field of Aging Awards



The North Carolina Association on Aging (NCAOA) is now accepting nominations for the 2026 Excellence in the Field of Aging Awards, recognizing outstanding professionals and programs serving older adults across North Carolina.

Award categories include Shining Star, Guiding Star, Rising Star, Rock Star, and Innovative Program.

Nominations are due Friday, April 24, 2026, and winners will be recognized during Older Americans Month in May.

Submit a nomination: [NCAOA Nomination Form](#)

Celebrate the impact. Nominate someone today!



Annual Conference Update: Spring 2027

After thoughtful consideration, the North Carolina Association on Aging Annual Conference will pause for one year and return in Spring 2027.

This pause allows NCAOA to plan a strong and meaningful conference experience that reflects the needs of our members and the evolving aging network.

During this time, NCAOA will continue to support members through ongoing opportunities for connection, learning, and engagement.

We appreciate your continued support and look forward to welcoming you back in Spring 2027.

North Carolina Senior Games Sees Strong Start to 2026 Season



The 2026 Local Games season is off to an exciting and energetic start across North Carolina.

To support a successful season, North Carolina Senior Games hosted its annual Local Games training in January, bringing together Local Coordinators from across the state. The training focused on preparing Local Coordinators for the months ahead while also welcoming and equipping the newest group of Senior Games Ambassadors.

As Local Senior Games programs across the state continue to open registration, numbers are trending higher than this time last year. This continued growth reflects the strong enthusiasm for Senior Games programs and the dedication of Local Coordinators, Ambassadors, and volunteers across the state.

This year's momentum builds on an already strong foundation. In 2025, North Carolina Senior Games hosted 54 Local Games. Of those, 21 Local Games recorded their highest participation ever, and 27 Local Games experienced growth over the past five years—an achievement worth celebrating.

Local Games truly are the foundation of Senior Games in North Carolina, creating meaningful opportunities for older adults across the state to stay active, connected, and engaged. NCSG is especially grateful for the communities, partners, and participants who continue to make this program thrive.

NCSG looks forward to building on this momentum as the season continues and are excited to celebrate participants from across North Carolina at the 2026 State Finals.

Following local competitions, qualifying athletes will advance to the 2026 North Carolina Senior Games State Finals. The event brings together participants from across the state to compete and build meaningful connections. It serves as a powerful reminder that staying active leads to healthier, more vibrant lives.





Advocacy
Led by a group of experienced advocates, Alliance members are afforded opportunities to influence public policy and the allocation of resources for senior centers.

Marketing
Marketing to the right audience is key to the success of your center. The alliance marketing team will equip you with tools to showcase your center.

Special Projects
The Special Projects team is dedicated to seeking out initiatives that enhance senior center operations.

Membership/Communications
This group of people work to collect applications and payment confirmations for centers wanting to be a part of the alliance. They also help to manage the listserv.

Training/Mentoring
The key to success in any field is adequate training. Training is provided through various opportunities. Mentoring is offered to members who would like to be matched with a seasoned Senior Center professional.

To get connected with the North Carolina Senior Center Alliance, please visit our website:
ncscalliance.org

The North Carolina Senior Center Alliance (NCSCA) represents a statewide network of approximately 163 senior centers serving older adults across North Carolina.

These centers play a vital role in promoting health, wellness, social engagement, and independence through programs such as fitness classes, educational workshops, nutrition services, and community outreach. As trusted community hubs, senior centers help reduce isolation, connect individuals to essential resources, and enhance the overall quality of life for North Carolina’s aging population.

Explore Ageism by Imagining Your Future Self

School Age Children: Imagine Your Future Self

The Division of Aging, part of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), wants to share an exciting opportunity for students across North Carolina to engage in a meaningful and creative initiative: the Future Self Contest, part of a statewide effort to raise awareness about ageism and intergenerational connection.

This contest invites Pre-K through 12th grade students to express their vision of a world where all ages are valued. Students may submit original work in a variety of formats, including:

- Poetry or short essays (250–500 words)
- Photography or visual art
- Dance, skits, or music (video or audio files)



Submissions will be judged by grade level. The contest encourages students to reflect on themes such as kindness toward older adults, friendships across generations, and challenging stereotypes about aging.

Winners will be announced by the end of April 2026.

Key Details:

Submission Link: [PreK-12form](https://www.dhhs.nc.gov/prek-12-form)

Questions: Email aaasnc@dhhs.nc.gov



Not Just Counted - Heard: How NCSTHL Is Shaping the Future of Aging in North Carolina

North Carolina's population is aging rapidly, bringing both opportunity and urgency. As more residents live longer, many face growing challenges in accessing the services needed to remain independent.

The North Carolina Senior Tar Heel Legislature (NCSTHL) plays a vital role in addressing these challenges. As a nonpartisan body representing approximately 2.7 million North Carolinians age 60 and older, NCSTHL works to educate, advocate, empower, and impact aging policy statewide. Each county is represented by a delegate and alternate who monitor aging issues year-round and bring forward the real concerns of their communities—providing policymakers with insight grounded in lived experience.

“Investing in older adults is not an expense—it is one of the smartest investments North Carolina can make in its economic strength, its communities, and its future,” states Gayla S. Woody, Speaker, North Carolina Senior Tar Heel Legislature.

We know aging—because we are living it.

Several key realities are shaping this work.

North Carolina is one of the fastest-aging states in the nation, with one in five residents projected to be age 65 or older by 2030 (U.S. Census Bureau; NC Office of State Budget & Management). Yet funding has not kept pace, and many counties report waitlists for essential services such as home-delivered meals, in-home aide support, transportation, and adult day care (NC Division of Aging and Adult Services; Area Agencies on Aging).

At the same time, spending remains heavily weighted toward institutional care. In SFY 2024, about 42% of aging expenditures supported institutional care, while only 2.3% supported home- and community-based services that allow individuals to remain at home (NC Department of Health and Human Services). This imbalance matters—aging in place is both preferred and more cost-effective.

**AGING
STRONG
TO EMPOWER NC**



www.ncsthl.org

The broader budget picture reinforces the concern. Although older adults represent about 25% of North Carolina's population, funding for aging-in-place services accounts for only 0.114% of the state's \$90 billion budget. Even including Medicaid-funded long-term care, total aging-related spending is about 6% (NC Office of State Budget & Management; NC DHHS).

Yet older adults remain one of the state's greatest assets as caregivers, volunteers, and community anchors.

There is a clear opportunity. Investments in healthy aging can yield a 3-to-1 return through reduced healthcare costs and stronger economic participation (AARP; Milken Institute).

These realities directly inform NCSTHL's work. Throughout the year, delegates and alternates engage with older adults, providers, elected officials and communities across the state, turning local concerns into formal resolutions. In October, 2026, members will select the top six priorities that will form the Legislative Agenda for the 2027 NC General Assembly Long Session.

This process depends on strong collaboration. Aging providers are encouraged to share insights, service gaps, and ideas by contacting the local STHL delegate or alternate or emailing GaylaSTHL@gmail.com. Those interested in serving can contact their local Area Agency on Aging for information about vacancies.

North Carolina's aging population is not simply a trend—it is a defining part of the state's future. The Senior Tar Heel Legislature ensures that North Carolina's aging population is not just counted—but truly heard, understood, and acted upon.

Aging Service Providers: Everyday Heroes in Our Communities

Across North Carolina and beyond, aging service providers quietly serve as the backbone of support for older adults. From senior center staff and Meals on Wheels drivers to transportation coordinators, social workers, and in-home aides, these professionals and volunteers step into their roles each day with a shared mission, helping older adults live with dignity, independence, and purpose. While their work may not always make headlines, its impact is felt in every community they serve.

These everyday heroes do far more than deliver services; they build relationships. A home-delivered meal is often paired with a wellness check and a friendly conversation. A transportation ride becomes a lifeline to medical care, groceries, and social connection. A case manager becomes a trusted advocate, helping navigate complex systems and ensuring that no one falls through the cracks. It is this human connection that transforms services into meaningful support.

The work of aging service providers is also deeply rooted in compassion and adaptability. They meet older adults where they are—whether that means addressing food insecurity, supporting caregivers, responding to health challenges, or reducing social isolation. In rural communities especially, where access to services can be limited, these providers often go above and beyond to bridge gaps and ensure equitable access to care and resources.



Thank  you

As North Carolina’s population continues to age, the demand for these services—and the individuals who provide them—is growing rapidly. Aging service providers are on the front lines of this demographic shift, responding to increasing needs with innovation, collaboration, and resilience. They are not only meeting today’s challenges but also helping to shape the future of aging services through advocacy, partnerships, and forward-thinking solutions.

Despite the complexity of their work, many providers remain humble, driven by a genuine desire to serve others. Their dedication is reflected in early mornings, long days, and a willingness to go the extra mile—often literally—to reach those in need. Whether coordinating services, delivering meals, or offering a listening ear, their commitment embodies the very essence of public service.

As we recognize the contributions of aging service providers, it is important to pause and say thank you. Their work strengthens families, supports communities, and improves the quality of life for thousands of older adults each day. They are not just service providers—they are advocates, problem-solvers, and, above all, everyday heroes in the field of aging.



Aging Data Snapshot: North Carolina by the Numbers

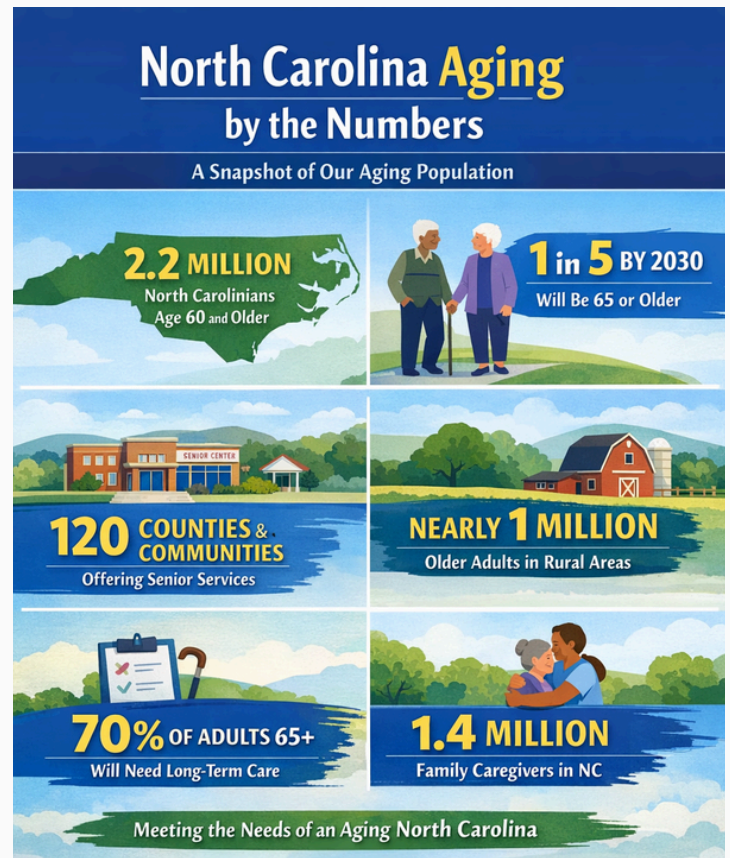
North Carolina's population is aging rapidly, bringing both opportunities and challenges for communities, policymakers, and aging service providers. Understanding the demographic trends shaping our state helps inform planning, policy, and programs that support older adults.

Key Facts About Aging in North Carolina

- 2.2 million North Carolinians age 60 and older
- 1 in 5 residents will be 65 or older by 2030
- 120 counties and communities providing senior center programs and aging services across the state
- Nearly 1 million older adults live in rural areas, where access to transportation and services can be more limited
- Approximately 70% of adults age 65+ will need long-term services and supports at some point in their lives
- More than 1.4 million family caregivers provide unpaid care to loved ones across North Carolina

Why These Numbers Matter

These demographic shifts highlight the growing importance of community-based programs such as senior centers, nutrition programs, transportation services, caregiver support, and in-home services. As the number of older adults continues to increase, collaboration among aging professionals, policymakers, and community partners will be essential to ensure that North Carolina remains a place where people can age with dignity, independence, and connection.



As demand for services continues to grow, communities must focus on innovative and sustainable approaches to supporting older adults. Strengthening partnerships with healthcare providers, local governments, nonprofits, and volunteers will be essential to expand reach and maximize resources—especially in rural areas. At the same time, it is important to recognize that older adults are not only recipients of services but also active contributors who bring experience, leadership, and value to their communities, helping to build a stronger, more age-friendly North Carolina for all.



These hands held ours, now we hold theirs.

Aging Services Providers

Aging in the NC Legislature

New Legislation focused on senior healthcare

One notable bill filed in the current legislative session is the "Senior Care Assurance Act."

- The bill aims to expand access to preventive care, chronic disease management, and geriatric services for adults 65+.
- It directs the state Medicaid program to cover services like osteoporosis screenings, cardiovascular assessments, medication management, and specialized geriatric care for seniors.
- It also proposes creating a Senior Preventive Health Grant Program with about \$2.5 million per year (2025-2027) to support providers offering screenings and consultations to low-income seniors.

The idea behind the bill is that preventive care and home-based care can keep seniors healthier and reduce expensive hospitalizations and institutional care.

Budget debates that affect aging services

A lot of the real impact on aging programs happens through the state budget process.

Current budget negotiations in the General Assembly include:

- Overall health and human services spending
- Funding levels for Medicaid and public health programs
- Funding adjustments within DHHS programs, including the Division of Aging
- Changes to positions and programs inside DHHS

The House and Senate have proposed different approaches to health spending in the \$32+ billion state budget, and final decisions will determine how much funding flows to programs that serve older adults.

For aging services providers, this often determines funding for things like:

- Home- and Community-Care Block Grant services
- caregiver supports
- adult day services
- transportation and nutrition programs

Efforts to strengthen community-based aging services

There are also proposals and advocacy efforts aimed at expanding services that help people age in place, including:

- new community-based services funding programs
- strengthening the Home and Community Care Block Grant system
- investments in senior centers and community supports

These programs are designed to help seniors stay in their homes instead of moving into nursing facilities.



The Big Takeaway:

The NC General Assembly is starting to recognize that North Carolina's aging population is growing quickly, but most of the action right now revolves around:

- healthcare access for seniors
- workforce shortages
- community-based services
- funding through the state budget

Much of the advocacy coming from the aging network is focused on getting more state investment to keep seniors independent longer.

Upcoming Dates to Watch

April 2026

- Budget negotiations are expected to restart in earnest around April.

Late spring / early summer 2026

- If negotiations go normally, the goal would be to reach a final agreement before the July 1 fiscal year deadline.

Addressing Social Isolation Among Older Adults

Social isolation and loneliness have become increasingly recognized as serious public health concerns for older adults. Research has shown that social isolation can have significant impacts on both physical and mental health, increasing risks for conditions such as depression, cognitive decline, and chronic illness.

Across North Carolina, aging service providers are working to address these challenges by creating opportunities for connection and engagement. Senior centers, volunteer programs, intergenerational activities, and community outreach initiatives all play important roles in helping older adults stay connected.

Transportation services, home-delivered meals programs, and friendly visitor programs also provide essential points of contact for seniors who may otherwise have limited interaction with others.

By continuing to invest in programs that foster social connection, communities can help ensure that older adults remain active participants in community life.



Senior Centers: A Vital Community Resource

Senior centers across North Carolina continue to play an important role in supporting older adults and strengthening communities. Often described as the “front door” to aging services, senior centers provide opportunities for older adults to stay active, engaged, and connected.

Programs offered through senior centers vary by community but often include health and wellness classes, educational workshops, volunteer opportunities, social activities, and access to important services and resources. Many centers also serve as gathering places where older adults can build friendships and combat social isolation.

In addition to programming, senior centers frequently serve as hubs for other aging services, including congregate nutrition programs, transportation coordination, and information and referral services.

As North Carolina’s older adult population continues to grow, senior centers will remain essential in helping communities respond to the needs of aging residents.



2026 Adult Day Services Conference Reconnect, Renew, and Reimagine

The 2026 Adult Day Services Conference was held March 24–25, bringing together professionals from across the state, including DSS, public health, Area Agencies on Aging, and other partners for two days of learning, collaboration, and networking. The event focused on reconnecting, renewing, and reimagining adult day services, providing valuable opportunities to share ideas and strengthen support for older adults and their caregivers.

The conference highlighted the vital role adult day services play in supporting aging in place and strengthening communities across North Carolina.

For those interested in learning more about adult day services and the professionals who support this important work, the North Carolina Adult Day Services Association (NCADSA) serves as a key resource and advocate. To explore membership, resources, and additional information, visit their website at ncadsa.com.

SAVE THE DATE

Annual Aging Conference

Connections that Count



October 16, 2026
Harris Conference Center
3216 CPCC Harris Campus Dr.
Charlotte, NC 28208



Free Monthly Trainings for Professionals in the Field of Aging

Upcoming webinars and training:

Smoking Cessation and Older Adults

Date: April 15th, 2026

Time: 10am-11am

[Register](#)

Matter of Balance Coach Training

Dates: April 16th and 17th, 2026

Time: 9am-3pm

[Register](#)

Breaking Down Ageism: Strategies for Awareness and Action

Date: May 19th, 2026

Time: 10am-11am

[Register](#)

Coming Together to Address NC's LTSS Workforce Crisis: Updates from the NC Center on the Workforce for Health

Date: June 3rd, 2026

Time: 10:00am-11:30am

[Register](#)



Share Your Story

Have a program success, innovative idea, or community partnership you'd like featured in the next NCAOA newsletter?

Send your content and photos to thessia.everhart@davidsoncountync.gov

We'd love to spotlight your work.

PROTECT OLDER ADULTS FROM SCAMS

Remind and educate older adults about scams targeting seniors.



Common Scams Include:



Phone Scams
(ex: Fake IRS Calls)



Email & Online Scams



Medicare & Social Security Fraud

Service providers, remind the seniors you work with to be wary of unsolicited calls, emails, and offers. Don't share sensitive personal or financial information.



Join Us. Stay Connected. **Make an Impact.**



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NCAOA's strength comes from its members. Share this newsletter with colleagues and become an active part of **North Carolina's aging network.**



Unified Voice



Timely Information



Professional Growth



Join or Renew Today!

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NCAOA Board of Directors



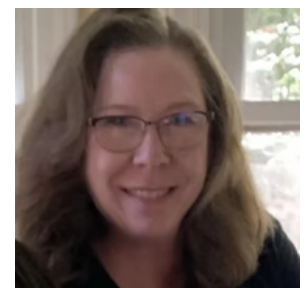
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